



HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT: HFD Public Affairs, 713-495-7900

Investigators Determine Cause of Saturday's 3-Alarm Apartment Fire

Houston Fire Department arson investigators have ruled the cause of Saturday's 3-alarm apartment fire on S. Gessner as no offense due to unattended cooking.

HFD was dispatched to the Linda Square Apartment complex at 7220 S. Gessner, about 2:40 p.m. on Saturday, April 12, 2008. Upon arrival, firefighters found fire and smoke coming from one building of the apartment complex. More than 130 HFD personnel responded to the 3-alarm fire. The fire was tapped-out a little after 4 p.m. after firefighters worked extremely hard to keep fire from traveling from the second story to the third story structure. Approximately 19 families were displaced by the fire. The American Red Cross was called to the scene and assisted the residents. There were no reported injuries.

HFD Firefighters will be visiting this apartment complex to talk with residents about fire safety, provide safety tips and batteries for smoke alarms today, April 15, 2008 at 1:30 p.m. The media contact is Captain Homero Ponce-Lopez, 713-891-0977.

The Houston Fire Department reminds citizens that unattended cooking is the number one cause of residential fires and can be prevented. Over half of these are grease fires. This year, HFD has responded to more than 100 reported residential fires caused by cooking.

It is always best to prevent a fire than to have to deal with one. Remember to use a moderate cooking temperature, don't overfill the container, and if you must leave the kitchen, turn the burner off .

- Turn pot handles away from the front of the stove. Curious children may reach up and grab the handle, pulling the hot contents down on themselves.
- Don't position handles over another burner, it may catch on fire or burn someone who touches it.
- Wear short sleeves or tight fitting long sleeves when cooking to reduce a clothing fire hazard.
- Shield yourself from scalding steam when lifting lids from hot pans.

- Make sure pot holders are not too close to the stove. They could catch fire!
- Keep ovens, broilers, stove tops, and exhaust ducts free from grease.
- If there is a fire in the oven - Turn off the oven and keep the oven door closed.

Over half the people attempting to extinguish a kitchen fire are injured. Often the best advice is to get everyone out of the house and call the fire department (911) from a neighbors house. Never try to move the pan, don't throw water on it, and don't put flour on it.

If you attempt to extinguish the fire, it is best to use a class ABC multipurpose fire extinguisher. Follow the manufacturers instructions - stay back 6 to 8 feet and be careful not to spray the grease out of the pan. Baking soda can also smother the fire. If the fire has not burned for more than fifteen seconds, it may still be possible to turn the burner off and use a tight fitting lid to smother the fire, but only if the fire is still small and has not spread beyond the pan.

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(The cause of the apartment fire on Broadway is currently under investigation)